

Message Text

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PAGE 01 CARACA 05551 301414Z

46

ACTION ARA-10

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 DIWY-01 CU-02 IO-10 AID-05 OES-03 HEW-02

PC-01 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-03 H-02 INR-07 L-03 NSAE-00

NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15 USIA-06 OMB-01

COME-00 EB-07 LAB-04 SIL-01 CIEP-01 EUR-12 FEAE-00

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SUBJECT: FIRST CONGRESS OF VENEZUELAN WOMEN

SUMMARY. FIRST CONGRESS OF VENEZUELAN WOMEN MET IN CARACAS MAY 21-25. PRESIDENT PEREZ STRONGLY SUPPORTED FAMILY PLANNING PROGRAMS AT THE FINAL SESSION. CONGRESS, WHILE MARKED BY WALKOUTS BY SOME DELEGATES, PASSED A NUMBER OF RESOLUTIONS DEALING WITH WOMEN'S RIGHTS AND ONE CRITICIZING PRESIDENT FORD FOR "THREATS OF WAR." END SUMMARY.

1. AFTER SEVERAL HEATED EXCHANGES, THE FIRST CONGRESS OF VENEZUELAN WOMEN CLOSED IN CARACAS ON MAY 25. PRESIDENT CARLOS ANDRES PEREZ ADDRESSED THE FINAL SESSION AND ANNOUNCED GOV WOULD WORK TO ABOLISH DISCRIMINATORY LAWS AGAINST WOMEN. PEREZ'S SPEECH WAS ON THE WHOLE VERY SUPPORTIVE OF THE WORK OF THE FIVE-DAY CONGRESS ATTENDED BY 2,000 VENEZUELAN WOMEN DELEGATES PLUS OBSERVERS FROM OTHER COUNTRIES. PEREZ RECEIVED ENTHUSIASTIC APPLAUSE WHEN HE TOLD THE DELEGATES, "A WOMAN SHOULD HAVE THE RIGHT TO BE A MOTHER WHEN SHE WISHES AND TO HAVE CHILDREN THAT LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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PAGE 02 CARACA 05551 301414Z

SHE CAN LOVE." PEREZ ADDED THAT FAMILY PLANNING SHOULD BE A

PRIORITY PROGRAM FOR VENEZUELA.

2. AD NATIONAL DEPUTY ELIA BORGES DE TAPIA, WHO IS ALSO VENEZUELA'S REPRESENTATIVE ON THE INTER-AMERICAN COMMISSION ON WOMEN, PRESIDED OVER THE HUGE ASSEMBLAGE OF WOMEN DRAWN FROM VENEZUELA'S VARIOUS POLITICAL, ECONOMIC AND IDEOLOGICAL SECTORS. MOST OF THE CONGRESS'S WORK WAS CARRIED OUT IN THE TEN WORKING GROUPS, EACH OF WHICH PRESENTED REPORTS TO THE FULL CONGRESS. DURING A STORMY SESSION OF THE FULL CONGRESS MAY 24, THE SOCIAL CHRISTIAN (COPEI) DELEGATES WALKED OUT WHEN ONE GROUP PROPOSED THAT THE EQUALITY OF CHILDREN BORN OUT OF WEDLOCK BE ESTABLISHED BY LAW. THE COPEI DELEGATES LATER CHARGED THAT THE CONGRESS WAS PUTTING FORWARD "REVOLUTIONARY CHANGES." THE COPEI WOMEN, AS WELL AS OTHER DELEGATES, ALSO CRITICIZED THE PRESENTATIONS MADE BY SOME OF THE INTERNATIONAL OBSERVERS, PARTICULARLY THAT OF MARGARITA RANDALL, A US CITIZEN ADVISER TO CASTRO AND MEMBER OF THE CUBAN DELEGATION AT THE CONGRESS, WHO CALLED ON VENEZUELAN WOMEN TO ADOPT A REVOLUTIONARY STANCE AS THE CUBAN AND VIETNAMESE WOMEN HAD DONE. OTHER DELEGATES, REPRESENTING THE MARXIST MOVEMENT OF THE REVOLUTIONARY LEFT (MIR), THE MOVEMENT TOWARDS THE NEW WOMAN, THE POPULAR DEMOCRATIC FORCE (FDP), AND OTHER SMALL LEFTIST GROUPS, ALSO WITHDREW FROM THE CONGRESS COMPLAINING OF NON-RECOGNITION BY THE CHAIR, ROUGH TREATMENT BY CONGRESS SECURITY GUARDS, AND CLAIMING THAT REPRESENTATION AT THE CONGRESS HAD BEEN STACKED IN FAVOR OF THE GOVERNING ACCION DEMOCRATICA (AD) PARTY.

3. AMONG RESOLUTIONS APPROVED BY THE CONGRESS, ONE "CONDEMNED AND REJECTED THREATS OF WAR MADE BY THE PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED STATES ON ACCOUNT OF THE NATIONALIZATION OF THE PETROLEUM INDUSTRY." THIS RESOLUTION WAS APPROVED AT A LATE NIGHT SESSION MAY 24 AT WHICH TIME MANY DELEGATES WERE ATTENDING THE NATIONAL DAY CELEBRATION AT THE ARGENTINE EMBASSY. OTHER RESOLUTIONS CALLED ON PRESIDENT PEREZ TO TAKE THE NECESSARY STEPS TO CREATE A LATIN AMERICAN ORGANIZATION FOR WOMEN'S INTEGRATION, ADVOCATED LEGAL REFORMS SO THAT WIVES HAVE EQUAL AUTHORITY WITH THEIR HUSBANDS IN THE ADMINISTRATION AND DISPOSITION OF PROPERTY, PROPOSED THAT THE PERIOD OF SEPARATION REQUIRED FOR DIVORCE BE REDUCED FROM TWO YEARS TO SIX MONTHS, AND CALLED FOR THE IMPLEMENTATION OF REHABILITATION PROGRAMS FOR DRUG ADDICTS. ANOTHER RESOLUTION

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PAGE 03 CARACA 05551 301414Z

CALLED ON THE CHILEAN GOVERNMENT TO FREE WOMEN PRISONERS AND RE-ESTABLISH HUMAN RIGHTS AND PUBLIC LIBERTIES. OBSERVERS FROM CHILE REPRESENTED BOTH PRO-ALLENDE AND ANTI-ALLENDE FACTIONS; THE PRO-ALLENDE GROUP WAS LED BY CARMEN LAZO WHO SEEMED TO HAVE THE WARM SUPPORT OF THE VENEZUELAN DELEGATES WHICH ENABLED HER TO OBTAIN THE FLOOR ALMOST WHENEVER SHE WISHED. THE OFFICIAL CHILEAN OBSERVER, ON THE OTHER HAND, EXPERIENCED CONSIDERABLE DIFFICULTY IN BEING RECOGNIZED IN ORDER TO RESPOND TO LAZO'S

CHARGES.

4. US OBSERVER RITA Z. JOHNSTON TOLD EMBOFF THAT ANTI-AMERICAN SENTIMENT WAS INTENSE DURING THE FIRST TWO DAYS OF THE CONGRESS. STRICT SECURITY MEASURES WERE IMPOSED ON THE THIRD DAY TO PREVENT UNAUTHORIZED ENTRY TO CONGRESS SESSIONS. CONGRESS ORGANIZERS SUGGESTED JOHNSTON SIT AT THE FRONT OF THE HALL IN ORDER TO ALLOW HER RAPID EXIT IN CASE OF TROUBLE. NO ANTI-AMERICAN INCIDENTS OCCURRED, HOWEVER.

5. COMMENT. PRESIDENT PEREZ'S STATEMENT ON FAMILY PLANNING DESCRIBING IT AS A "PRIORITY PROGRAM OF A DEMOCRATIC SOCIETY" IS A PUBLIC ANNOUNCEMENT OF WHAT HE HAS BEEN SAYING IN PRIVATE TO VENEZUELAN FAMILY PLANNERS SINCE TAKING OFFICE LASTYEAR. NEVERTHELESS, IT IS THE MOST ALL-ENCOMPASSING PUBLIC STATEMENT SUPPORTING FAMILY PLANNING EVER MADE BY THE GOV. IMPLEMENTATION DURING THE NEXT FOUR YEARS WILL INVOLVE A SEVERAL-FOLD EXPANSION OF THE GOV FAMILY PLANNING PROGRAM.

6. SOME VENEZUELAN DELEGATES COMPLAINED ABOUT THE "LEFTIST" POSTURE OF THE CONGRESS. IN FACT, THE LEFT WAS DIVIDED AT THE CONGRESS. AFTER THE MIR, FDP, AND OTHER LEFTIST DELEGATIONS WALKED OUT ON MAY 24, DELEGATES FROM THE MOVEMENT TO SOCIALISM (MAS), THE VENEZUELAN COMMUNIST PARTY (PCV), AND THE PEOPLE'S ELECTORAL MOVEMENT (MEP) REMAINED ALONG WITH THE MAJORITY AD DELEGATION TO SIGN THE FINAL CONGRESS DOCUMENT ON MAY 25. FAR-LEFT JOURNALIST DOMINGO ALBERTO RANGEL WROTE OFF THE CONGRESS AS A "FARCE, FINANCED AND ORGANIZED BY A REACTIONARY GOVERNMENT," WHICH "PRETENDED TO SPEAK OF WOMEN'S LIBERATION." RANGEL MAINTAINED THAT LEFTIST PARTIES WITH "PRINCIPLES" SHOULD NOT TAKE PART IN EVENTS "DERIVED FROM BUREAUCRATIC APPETITES AND FROM THE DISHONESTY OF RENEGADES." IN FACT THE CONGRESS WAS MORE NOTABLE FOR RHETORIC THAN ACCOMPLISHMENT, BUT DID PRODUCE LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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A DOCUMENT OUTLINING SOME NECESSARY CHANGES FOR THE ADVANCEMENT OF WOMEN IN VENEZUELAN SOCIETY. END COMMENT.
SHLAUDEMAM

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